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**Citizenship, marginalisation and youth offending:**

**Acceptance, responsibility and resettlement**

Andrew Parker and Haydn Morgan

## **Abstract**

Despite a fall in recorded crime in the UK in recent years, youth offending continues to present itself as a social problem in many communities and has become an issue of serious concern for practitioners, politicians and policy makers alike. Where educational programmes have been utilised to address recidivism, a focus on developing aspects of personally responsible citizenship has dominated. This article presents the findings of one such programme, which was designed to deliver a residential care and support package to young males (aged 16-18) with the aim of reducing their likelihood of re-offending. More specifically, the article provides insight into some of the key elements of the 'journey to citizenship' (Tambakaki 2015) that these young men undertook highlighting how the initiation of interpersonal relationships around notions of acceptance and recognition, provided the foundations upon which personally responsible citizenship might be constructed.

**Keywords:** Citizenship, youth justice, young offenders, residential care; qualitative research.

## **Introduction**

Recent figures show that the number of people entering the youth and criminal justice system in England and Wales is declining. Specifically, where young offenders (children and young people aged 10-17 years) are concerned, there has been a fall in the number of first time entrants to 14,400 in the year ending March 2018, down 14% on the previous year with an overall reduction of 86% since 2008 (Ministry of Justice 2019). Data also reveal that the rate of re-offending amongst this cohort (i.e., the percentage of offenders who reoffended within 12 months) is also down - 1.3 percentage points on the previous year - yet remains higher than a

decade ago (38.1%). Despite these falls, youth offending (especially knife and gun crime)<sup>1</sup> continues to present itself as a social problem in many UK communities and has become an issue of serious concern for practitioners, politicians and policy makers alike (Author, 2014; Bateman, 2017; Home Affairs Committee, 2019). Accordingly, strategies to reduce re-offending have adopted a range of approaches including the structuring of interventions around mentoring, education, employment/training, and resettlement packages (see HM Government, 2018; Jolliffe and Farrington 2011; Jacobson 2012; Banks 2013).

Where educational programmes have been utilised to address recidivism, a focus on instilling discipline, obedience and qualities associated with ‘good character’ has dominated, on the assumption that young offenders possess significant moral defects or deficits (Westheimer and Kahne 2004; Banks 2013; Muncie 2015). Such thinking appeals to the notion that citizenship education should be at the forefront of efforts to reduce youth crime. While definitions vary as to what the term citizenship means (see Tyler 2010; Tonkiss and Bloom 2015; Turner 2016), existing literature categorises two broad forms. First, are *passive* forms of citizenship, which accentuate ideas related to civil obedience (Carr 1991), individual freedoms, access to civil rights, participation in political activities (e.g., suffrage), and access to educational and welfare systems (Marshall 1964; Tonkiss and Bloom 2015). Conversely, *active* forms of citizenship place an onus on democratic engagement (ten Dam et al. 2011) and active participation within society (Scheerens 2011). Given the highly marginalised (and often maligned) status of young offenders (see Holt and Pammet 2012), the mistrust and

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<sup>1</sup> According to the UK Ministry of Justice (2019), 4500 knife and offensive weapon offences were committed by children/young people in 2017-2018, a 7% increase on the previous year.

stigmatisation associated with this population brings into question their position as citizens (Tambakaki 2015), and, indeed, their ability to engage with and/or attain these two forms of citizenship.

This paper presents findings from a small-scale qualitative study of the New Horizons<sup>2</sup> rehabilitation project, a three-year pilot scheme that was designed to establish and deliver a package of residential care and support (at a facility hereinafter referred to as Thatchwell House) for young males (aged 16-18) leaving custody and to act as a co-ordinated response to their resettlement, rehabilitation and reintegration needs.<sup>3</sup> Residence at Thatchwell House was supplemented by education, training, employment and social development opportunities designed to enable those involved to become ‘independent, active and contributing members of society’.<sup>4</sup> The paper aims to demonstrate how and to what extent New Horizons facilitated this development by providing insights into some of the key elements of the “journey to citizenship” undertaken by programme participants (Tambakaki 2015, 923). More specifically, the paper highlights how the initiation of interpersonal relationships between staff and the young people involved was intentionally structured around notions of acceptance and recognition (Whittaker 2010; Rose et al. 2012; Author, 2017) in order to provide the foundations upon which personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer and Kahne 2004) might be constructed. In addressing these issues, the paper also seeks to contribute to existing debates surrounding the effectiveness of youth justice interventions amidst more recent concerns around the re-structuring of the youth estate in England (see Ministry of Justice, 2016a, 2016b; Prison Reform Trust, 2016; Youth Custody Improvement Board, 2017), the

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<sup>2</sup> In the interests of anonymity, pseudonyms have been used throughout.

<sup>3</sup> The New Horizons project was formally hosted by a charity of the same name. Its stated aims included reducing levels of re-offending and the provision of accommodation for those at risk of homelessness and/or who had no suitable accommodation to return to.

<sup>4</sup> This phrase constituted a key aim of the New Horizons project and appeared in all its policy documentation and publicity materials.

prevalence, nature and demographic of youth crime, and related rates of incarceration and re-offending (Lammy, 2017; Youth Justice Board, 2018).

### **Citizenship education – developing ‘passive’ or ‘active’ citizens?**

The concept of citizenship has received heightened academic scrutiny in recent years, this in the wake of citizenship education becoming a staple concern for governments across the globe (Scheerens 2011; ten Dam et al. 2011; Geboers et al. 2013). Yet despite increased attention, conceptual clarity over the term remains contentious and contested (Geboers et al. 2013; Turner 2016). Early iterations of citizenship invoked a central focus on the preparation of citizens for the social environment which they would inhabit, with formal education being identified as the vehicle through which this vision might be operationalised (Durkheim 1956). Consequently, as Carr (1991) observes, this form of citizenship education encompassed notions of loyalty, patriotism and civil obedience—in short, a passive model.

Uppermost within this perspective is an understanding of citizenship based upon three inter-related attributes: first, a legal/civil component where citizens are afforded individual freedoms and access to civil rights in return for meeting a set of societal obligations; second, a political component encompassing access to and participation in political activities (e.g., suffrage); and, finally, a social/identity component which accentuates access to education and welfare systems alongside membership of the citizenry (see Tonkiss and Bloom 2016). More contemporary articulations of passive citizenship have extended and unpacked the civil, political and social nature of the concept, defining citizenship in terms of membership, identity, values, and rights of participation (Cogan 2000; Enslin 2000; Knight Abowitz and Harnish 2006). However, in

all articulations, there is clear overlap and resonance with notions of conformity and convention that constitute the passive forms of citizenship highlighted above.

In contrast, other scholars have suggested that the instability of global political, economic, social and technological conditions requires an understanding of citizenship which accentuates a more dynamic or ‘active’ form to appreciate and perform the key social tasks of contemporary society (Knight Abowitz and Harnish 2006; ten Dam et al. 2011; Dalton 2014). As a starting point to conceptualise this alternative perspective, literature indicates that active citizenship must be cognisant of three dimensions: (i) a cognitive dimension, which integrates knowledge about democratic institutions; (ii) a pragmatic dimension, which fosters active engagement and obtaining experience of society; and (iii) an affective dimension, which encompasses how to develop attachments to and relationships within the society and communities to which an individual belongs (see Scheerens 2011; Dalton 2014). Critically, these authors advance that the ability to reflect upon action is a vital component of the active citizen, to enable young people to contemplate and assess the sensibilities, subjectivities and contributions of others around them before acting.

In an attempt to provide structure to these diverse and contrasting positions, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) put forward a theoretical framework which proposes three ‘visions’ of citizenship. The first of these—the personally responsible citizen—prioritises social responsibility and functionality as pivotal to good citizenship (Westheimer and Kahne 2004; ten Dam et al. 2011). More specifically, the development of personally responsible citizens accentuates the building of character through the prominence of such qualities as compassion for others, honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work (Westheimer and Kahne 2004).

However, as Westheimer and Kahne (2004) acknowledge, while the promotion of personal responsibility is irrefutably admirable, the obedient, passive nature of this form of citizenship restricts the degree to which critically-informed reflection and action—the key components of active citizenship—can be attained. Consequently, they encourage the pursuit of two alternative forms of citizenship; the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen. The participatory citizen is principally an activist who engages more deeply with community issues, their involvement transcending basic forms of community responsibility and concentrating instead on the creation of deeper “relationships, common understandings, trust, and collective commitments” (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, 242). In contrast, the justice-oriented citizen exhibits a more critical and analytical engagement with society, questioning and challenging established structures and systems which, historically, have supported social injustice (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Nevertheless, as Westheimer and Kahne concede, the majority of programmes and initiatives which are designed to enhance citizenship attributes tend to position these more active forms lower down in the hierarchy of priorities, preferring instead to focus upon the espousal of values associated with passive, responsibilised citizenship. This is certainly the case with educational programmes for young offenders (the context for this paper), where a focus on developing the attributes of passive, responsibilised citizenship are typically apparent (see Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Banks 2013; Muncie 2015).

### **Paid employment and personally responsible citizenship**

A further, yet important, feature of Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) vision of the personally responsible citizen is the onus on paid work. Mirroring other discourses which highlight paid employment as an indicator of social inclusion, and thus, citizenship (see Levitas 2005), work (and taxation) signifies an essential means through which individuals can contribute to and become consumers of society (Westheimer and Kahne 2004; Paton et al. 2012). When



expressed in these terms, the personally responsible citizen is indicative of a re-imagined form of citizenship, which has resulted from the ascendancy of neoliberalism as the dominant mode of governance within advanced industrial societies (Rose 2000; Dean 2010; Winlow and Hall 2013; Dalton 2014).

Building upon this argument, Rose (2000) observes how, under neoliberal logic, contemporary political government has retreated from its obligation to plan, steer and directly address the problems generated by and within society, moving instead towards a governance model whereby individuals assume personal responsibility to become more active and enterprising in resolving these problems. This “double movement of autonomisation and responsabilisation” (Rose 2000, 1400) outlines how the role of government (and its policies) has shifted to one which enables individuals to take control of their own destiny, to reinforce the individualistic vision associated with the personally responsible citizen (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). For Tyler (2010, 71), this shift represents “a model of citizenship in which it is the responsibility of the individual citizen to earn, demonstrate or buy their ‘right’ to state protection”. In semblance, Silk and Andrews (2011: 435) highlight how the onus which is placed on individuals to become accountable for the choices they make as citizens, enables society to be demarcated between citizens who are socially valorised and those who are socially pathologised, or, in their words, “anti-citizens”. Consequently, the problematisation of certain individuals serves as a convenient framework through which citizenship can be expressed as naturalistic, whereby it is incumbent upon marginalised groups to adhere to laws, enhance their capabilities for work, and reduce their welfare-dependency—symbolic of a re-imagined, responsabilised citizenship (Paton et al. 2012; Winlow and Hall 2013).

When expressed in these terms, questions arise as to the extent to which young offenders can be categorised as fully-fledged members of the citizenry (Tambakaki 2015; Tonkiss and Bloom 2015). Indeed, because many educational programmes directed at this group aim to develop the hallmarks of responsibilised citizenship and cast their gaze upon the development of discipline, obedience and ‘good’ character (Banks 2013; Muncie 2015), this would necessarily posit these young people as ‘falling short’ of full citizenship, and render them ‘non-citizens’ (Tonkiss and Bloom 2015; Tambakaki 2016). While we accept that typical descriptions of non-citizenship are reserved for populations whose access to basic rights is perilous and insecure (e.g., illegal immigrants, refugees, third-country nationals, etc. (see Tambakaki 2015)), pluralistic understandings of non-citizenship also refer to populations who are “mistrusted, marginalised or stigmatised by dominant norms” (Tambakaki 2015, 924), or those who experience vulnerability and powerlessness (Tonkiss and Bloom 2015). As such, this understanding of the non-citizen intersects with the experiences of the young offender, in particular in relation to their marginalisation through legal, political and social disempowerment, and, typically, a sense of not belonging (Tonkiss and Bloom 2015; Turner 2016).

Academic endeavours to situate ‘belonging’ as a critical step in the journey to citizenship (Tambakaki 2015) have been observed in the literature. For example, Whittaker (2010) notes how such connections are reinforced through formal structures of *recognition*, whereby positive engagement with institutions that are recognised by mainstream society (e.g. schools) enables a stronger sense of belonging and self-perception (Cheng et al. 2006). Therefore, for young people who experience difficulty in attaining positive recognition from formal sources, such as those featured here, the potential for further stigmatisation, marginalisation and exclusion becomes more pronounced (Hodgkinson, 2004). In a similar vein, Rose et al. (2012)

identify how *acceptance*, based upon a reciprocal sense of respect, acknowledgement and trust, both from peers and by people perceived to be in power, becomes an essential component in the process of initiating a sense of belonging and, in turn, responsibilised citizenship.

Research has highlighted how strategies which have encompassed opportunities for informal structures of recognition and the construction of inter-personal relationships built upon trust and mutual respect have enabled integration into more conventional notions of citizenship (see Whittaker 2010; Rose et al. 2012; Author, 2017). Moreover, these studies have demonstrated how acceptance and acknowledgement from those perceived to be in power may provide a foundation upon which young people can forge an alternative disposition towards mainstream values and societal roles which align with the personally responsible citizen (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). Therefore, potential exists to map how informal recognition and interpersonal acceptance may act to assist social assimilation among young offenders, and offer an alternative understanding through which citizenship may be obtained, enhanced or granted.

Of course, such narratives are also impacted by wider notions of youth identity especially those concerning gender, ethnicity and social class. In the case of young working class men, for example, the successful shift from school to waged work has long been viewed as a core constituent of masculine identity; a process which has witnessed significant disruption in recent decades due to changes at the economic and political level (Furlong, 2006; McDonald et al., 2005; McDonald, 2008; McDowell, 2003, 2014, Nayak, 2006). The core elements of the occupational culture surrounding working-class life have been highlighted in a number of seminal sociological studies (see, for example, Cockburn, 1983; Collinson, 1992). Within this literature manual labour is cited as a whirlpool of workplace dynamics commonly comprising; a strict male chauvinism, a ‘breadwinner’/manual production mentality, and a coarse sexist

humour manufactured around practical jokes, gestures and racist/homophobic connotation (Beynon, 1975; Collinson, 1988).

In so far as all of the respondents in the present study emanated from traditional lower working-class backgrounds and had pre-empted their transition into adult life at the expense of formal education, their life histories correlated strongly with the findings of those who have eloquently mapped the existence of ‘disaffected’ youth in compulsory educational settings (Willis, 1977; Messerschmidt, 1994). Likewise, these life histories manifested myriad connections between masculine identity and crime which have also been well documented (see Newburn and Stanko, 1994; Barker, 2005). The construction of such attitudes is complex and by no means uniform but collectively what many of these accounts highlight is that, as far as adolescent males are concerned, class-based narratives of educational dismissal may be closely linked with the development of a ‘protest’ masculine identity which militates against conventional notions of waged labour and which often rejects traditional forms of citizenship (see Connell, 1995, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; McDowell et al., 2014; Ilan, 2011, 2013).

### **Context and method**

The empirical findings featured here are drawn from an evaluation study which sought to investigate the impact of the New Horizons project on those living at its Thatchwell House residential facility. The project commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and ran until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013 and was funded by the UK Youth Justice Board (YJB) alongside a number of grant giving charities and fund raising agencies.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, the study included an exploration of the subjective experiences and perceptions of the project for residents, management and

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<sup>5</sup> The Youth Justice Board were partial stakeholders providing approximately 45% of project funding year-on-year.

governance representatives, and professionals from associated organisations (i.e., education/training, employment, Youth Offending Teams). The project catered for up to eight young people (males, aged 16-18 years) at any one time as they exited the secure youth estate (custody), many of whom emanated from highly dysfunctional and chaotic personal/family backgrounds, had previous experience of the criminal justice system, were at serious risk of re-offending and, because of their offending histories, were ineligible for alternative programmes of support. The number of referrals received from custodial settings during the first year of the project was 35 of which 16 individuals (46%) entered the project. Of the 28 referrals received in year two, 18 (64%) took up residency. Throughout the duration of the project there was a tendency for entrants to be located towards the upper end of the stipulated age limit (16-18 years) with the average age being 17.3 years. At the outset, the typical length of occupancy envisaged for residents was six to 12 months. However, the average number of days of occupancy (per young person) over the life of the project was 70.7 days. All residents were UK nationals.

Thatchwell House itself comprised a two-storey detached property situated in approximately half an acre of land on the outskirts of a large cosmopolitan conurbation in the South West of England. The upper floor featured eight single (resident) bedrooms, a shared bathroom area, and a separate bedroom for staff. The ground floor comprised a number of rooms all of which were designed for communal use: a large lounge area at the rear of the property (featuring television/DVD/video games, pool table etc.) which looked out (and provided access) onto an organic garden, a large open plan kitchen and dining area, a separate smaller lounge at the front of the property also with television and video/DVD facilities), an IT room housing four desktop computers, and a connecting 'outhouse' containing basic exercise equipment. The property was set in spacious grounds which residents were encouraged to maintain and from which a

small amount of produce (i.e., vegetables, fruit and chicken's eggs) was gleaned. The house was staffed at all times by a minimum of two project 'Key Workers' and residents were free to come and go as they wished; this included being allowed to spend occasional nights away with family and friends with the prior permission of the House Manager. In turn, a Code of Conduct was in place stipulating basic 'House Rules' and this included an expectation that an 11.00pm curfew time would be observed on evening return.

The research was driven by a constructionist ontology and interpretive epistemology with the aim of eliciting the subjective interpretations of the everyday lives of the young people concerned in relation to their participation in and experiences of the New Horizons project (Bryman 2015). Data were collected over the duration of the project by way of observational fieldnotes, one-to-one semi-structured interviews and focus groups with residents, project staff (including the House Manager and Deputy House Manager), and members of the charity's Board of Trustees.<sup>6</sup> The findings presented here are drawn from semi-structured and focus group interviews with residents and project staff only. In an attempt to generate a legitimate sense of engagement with and ownership of the project, the staff team actively encouraged residents to volunteer as respondents for the evaluation. Accordingly, all resident interviewees were self-selecting, collectively providing a cross-section of those experiencing life at Thatchwell House. It is widely accepted that children and young people may be considered especially vulnerable within the context of research and for this reason methodological sensitivity was a central aspect of project design (see also Ahmed Shafi, 2018). At the forefront of such debates is the 'voice' of the young person and the extent to which the power dynamics of the research-researcher relationship is adequately managed (Holt and Pamment, 2012; Lundy, 2007; Stafford et al., 2003) and these issues were taken into account throughout the

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<sup>6</sup> Permissions to disseminate the data findings were not granted until sometime after project completion.

data collection process. Interview and focus group discussions explored resident experiences of engaging with the project and its related activities (i.e., education, training etc.). Interview discussion topics varied with both residents and staff being asked about their entry route into the project, their awareness of its overarching aims and objectives, and their subjective experiences of the care and support package on offer. The evaluation comprised 30 face-to-face meetings (individual researcher visits) with Thatchwell House staff and residents. Data sources included minutes of meetings of the project's Trustee Board, Steering Group and Executive Committee, 10 in-depth, one-to-one interviews with residents, two focus group interviews with the staff team (comprising four males and four females), and one focus group interview with the Charity's Board of Trustees (comprising five males and four females). In addition, access was granted to the 'contact book' used by the Thatchwell House staff team to relay messages concerning resident behaviour between and across shift patterns. In line with the wider demographic profile in play, eight of the resident interviewees were white the other two being of mixed heritage.

Interviews lasted between 20-75 minutes and were recorded and transcribed in full.<sup>7</sup> Thematic and axial coding was utilised in relation to the analysis of these data where the research teams adopted a cyclical process of examination and inductive interpretation to draw out themes and meanings in response to the primary aims of the research and in line with the key themes and concepts identified from the existing literature (Charmaz, 2014). Data were analysed in four stages. Firstly, the transcripts were read in full to gain an overview of the data. Secondly, each transcript was individually coded and indexed whereby a capturing of the different aspects of participant experience took place. Thirdly, these experiences were then categorised into a number of over-arching topics broadly relating to issues of 'acceptance', 'responsibility' and

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<sup>7</sup> Variations on interview timings were solely due to the availability of respondents.

‘citizenship’. The final stage of analysis involved the formal organisation of these topics into generic themes by further exploring the key issues around participant experience and framing those experiences within the context of existing conceptual debate (differentiated by respondents). These themes comprised: (i) ‘gaining acceptance’, and (ii) ‘building the personally responsible citizen’. The first of these themes is addressed primarily from the perspective of residents (i.e., young people), whilst the second incorporates the wider views of the staff team in order to provide greater contextual clarity around the delivery and impact of the project.

### **Gaining acceptance**

According to Banks (2013), custody within a juvenile institution acts to stigmatise youth and label them among marginalised populations, which in turn, promotes negative self-image and anxiety regarding (re)integration into mainstream society. Interviews carried out with New Horizons staff revealed a certain amount of anxiety amongst residents in relation to initial arrival at Thatchwell House. For those with previous experiences of ‘hostel’ living, such anxieties were commonplace with a number of the young men speaking of their fears of finding themselves surrounded, yet again, by people with severe drug, alcohol and/or wider addiction problems. Indeed, for many residents the stability of what might be regarded as conventional domestic life was, at best, a distant memory. Perhaps not surprisingly, on entry, into Thatchwell House their initial impressions were overwhelmingly positive. To this end, residents regularly spoke of the ‘homely’ atmosphere within the property and how this represented something of a contrast to previous post-custody accommodation. In addition to the benefits of being housed in a warm, clean and comfortable environment, residents also spoke openly and positively about the ‘family’ atmosphere within the house and the ‘care and support’ provided by the staff



team. The comments of Steve and Anthony during one-to-one interview were typical in this respect:

I come here on ROTL [Release on Temporary Licence] an' didn't get too much of a feel for the place but when I come in [at the end of my sentence] I got on with the people alright and it seemed like a good opportunity ... Straight away I knew that this is the place where I should be and that it would get me out of trouble. An' they're all lovely people here, even the boys [fellow residents]. They're like brothers ... (Steve).

It was nice here. When they showed me round it was really nice. It just feels like home (Anthony).

Compared to the custodial settings to which residents were accustomed, Thatchwell House operated a relatively relaxed behavioural regime in an attempt to treat its young charges with respect and engender a sense of reciprocation (Rose et al. 2012). In particular, residents readily acknowledged and appreciated the time taken by staff to make them feel welcome, to listen to them, to support their emotional needs, and to provide help with everyday practical and domestic tasks such as washing, cooking and cleaning. As Craig recalled during interview:

Yeah, most of the staff are alright. They all offer you a lot of support and they're friendly, funny. Help you cook, and iron and clean. Show you everythin' like, the skills that you need. I've been in hostels an' that before but they don't offer you the support that you get here. They just sit in their office. They chat to you now and again but here you get the support 24/7.

Such testimonies resonate with themes identified by Rose et al. (2012), which highlight how, for marginalised individuals, the development of positive social relationships with people perceived to hold authority enables a sense of acceptance and belonging which, in turn, promotes feelings of inclusion. In other words, the simple gestures of staff (such as listening to the young people), alongside the positive attention afforded residents, generated connections to be created with a ‘recognised’ and ‘legitimate’ social institution (Author, 2017), upon which reciprocity of support, trust, and a sense of belonging could be constructed (Rose et al. 2012). Indeed, such was the depth of the relationships between some residents and staff that return ‘visits’ to the house (post-residency) to discuss personal progress and to seek general advice about lifestyle issues was not uncommon, as Steve reflected during a staff focus group:

...They’re always reminding you about meetings. If you’ve got no food, if you’ve got money problems, they’ll help you out. They’ll help you out with getting a job. Doctors. Everything. You just have to ask. Where I was before you’d have to ask at least 20 times to get help. Here, ask em’ once an’ they’ll help ya’.

Whilst the development of positive, accepting interpersonal relationships were both welcomed by and beneficial to residents in building recognition and trust (Whittaker 2010), staff were acutely aware of the necessity to avoid a sense of dependency being generated on the part of residents (Banks 2013). As noted, one of the fundamental objectives of the project was for residents to become independent, active and contributing members of society. Consequently, and echoing contemporary discourses surrounding the development of citizenship qualities (see Westheimer and Kahne 2004), one of the initial tasks of staff was to inculcate a sense of

personal responsibility among residents, and it to this specific issue which our analysis now turns.

### **Building the personally responsible citizen**

Prior to being in custody, the majority of Thatchwell House residents had frequented chaotic lifestyles which were largely devoid of a sense of responsibility (either towards oneself or others). The behavioural regimes of custodial settings had presented something of a contrast in this respect yet at the same time they had served to propagate a sense of institutional dependency. Consequently, it was the role of New Horizons staff to re-educate and re-socialise residents in relation to the basic responsibilities of everyday life and to help them see such responsibilities as gateways to better decision-making and a more positive future, rather than as a set of constraints and obstacles. While residents' lives manifested a range of different circumstances in relation to legal constraint,<sup>8</sup> day-to-day routines within Thatchwell House were established and a range of behavioural expectations were gradually put in place for the benefit of both staff and residents.

Such processes align cogently with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) category of the personally responsible citizen. As noted, the accent of efforts to develop this category of citizen is placed upon building "character and personal responsibility by emphasising honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work" (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, 241). In addition, the personally responsible citizen has a strong sense of their obligations to society, voluntarily contributing time or money to aid their community or recognise the necessity to work, and contribute to society via taxation (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). As a starting point from which to develop

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<sup>8</sup> For example, some residents were on Licence (serving the remainder of their sentences whilst living in the community), whereas others possessed a greater measure of freedom and liberty.

the qualities associated with good character and personal responsibility, staff at New Horizons recognised the need to provide a sense of consistency and predictability for residents in terms of their everyday lives which, in turn, necessitated the need for an adherence to and an upholding of policies, agreements and rules. As Carol (project staff member) explained during focus group discussion:

From the [staff] group that we've got we're all going to be singing off the same hymn sheet ... we're all going to be heading for the same thing. And once the kids [residents] realise that you can't play one [staff member] off against the other ... then they're going to be better young men.

By way of example, it was common practice for staff to wake residents at 8.00am, primarily to check on their general welfare, but also to establish and maintain a sense of routine. While literature has noted how a lack of routine may contribute to recidivism (see Banks 2013), for Jonathan (a resident), such practices and expectations were problematic, and tantamount to being in custody:

That's what they do in jail, check if you're alright. But even though they do that here they could just wake you up to check that you're breathin' or whatever. It just pisses me off. When I come out [of custody] it feels like I'm still in jail ... cos' I'm still getting up at the same times and still doin' the same things. As soon as they wake me up I've got to jump up and get in the shower. It's no different [to custody] ... Come in here and they're tellin' you what to do. Fuck me. Exactly like jail, except you're allowed to walk out the door and you've got a bit of freedom. ... Is that it?

Perhaps not surprisingly, amidst staff attempts to develop attributes of personal responsibility and, in particular, self-discipline (Westheimer and Kahne 2004), there were times when resident behaviours presented challenges. One such issue frequently arose around the provision of food, where, as a precautionary measure, Thatchwell House held a reserve supply of food in the event that residents found themselves unable to meet their basic everyday needs, due to legitimate and unforeseen financial circumstance or poor money management. As Carol (staff) explained:

Well the thing is ... there's a couple of lads [residents] who aren't getting any money at the moment so, yeah, we need to supply something for them. But, y'know, when you've got lads here who know that there are provisions there, they're basically taking the Mick ... When we're supplying noodles, beans, bread throughout all of the day – and up until recently it was also cereals – how are we aiding them to live independently? ... If anything we're setting them up to fail.

Speaking on behalf of the majority of the staff team, Ann also stressed the importance of finding the balance between residential provision, organisational regimen and behavioural boundaries:

... If we're providing cereals and toast all day, if they get up at 11.00am ... are we setting them up to actually manage their own day and go to work? ... Not many people start at 11.00am. They should be having that early in the morning. I think then you've got consistency and we all know that these boys thrive where there's consistency. So ... if we have certain [eating] times and they miss it then it's 'No

sorry, it's gone. It's not breakfast time anymore you didn't get up, sorry you've missed your cereals this morning'. After a couple of mornings they'll realise ...

While staff conceded that maintaining a balance between strict routine and providing residents with greater autonomy was “a relentless battle” (Carol) and “all part of the learning curve” (Diane), over time the staff team reached a point where they had devised and established a series of rules, regulations and behavioural expectations which were effective in maintaining the day-to-day running of the house. More importantly, they had individually and collectively determined how best to negotiate the re-socialisation of residents and enable the young men in their care to negotiate the transition from custody to community life. Again, the construction of interpersonal relationships built upon recognition and acceptance (Whittaker 2010) were pivotal to incubating a stronger commitment by residents to becoming citizens who were not only responsible to and for themselves, but also to those with whom they interacted. How then, we might ask, did citizenship manifest itself in the lives of residents? For Craig, residency at Thatchwell House had been much more than simply a matter of learning new skills, in addition it had acted as a form of cognitive behavioural intervention which had stimulated a series of wider thought processes about what life might look like going forward (Banks 2013):

It's changed my mind about just goin' out an' getting pissed up. I'd rather see my girlfriend an' that an' like, just have a job. I've obviously got a bit older and a bit wiser.

Similarly, and echoing the sentiments of the majority, Steve elaborated:

In all honesty I couldn't ask for more. This place has given me everything I need an' that I want at exactly the right time. I'm 18. I need to man-up, get a job and

mature an' obviously they'll [the project staff team help me with that 100% all the way.

Further evidence as to how the approach taken by staff had broadened the horizons of residents and developed personally responsible citizenship was provided by Craig, when he highlighted how he (and a number of other residents) had come to the point where they were willing to contribute to the up-keep and maintenance of the House, and potentially the wider community (Westheimer and Kahne 2004), in return for a small amount of remuneration:

They're [the residents] bored sittin' around and there's jobs to do so if they [the staff] chucked em' a tenner [£10] or something they [the residents] could earn themselves a bit of cash. An' it keeps em' busy dunn'it. You know, jobs around the house. See, if they can't find things to do in the community or whatever, chuck em' a little bit of cash. Keeps em' busy ...

While Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) categorisation indicates that voluntary contribution typifies the personally responsible citizen, it was clear that, like most young men of their age, money mattered to the residents at Thatchwell House (Small et al. 2010; Lamont and Small 2010). However, for Brett (another resident), the whole notion of cultivating a sense of responsibility and demonstrating accountability around financial matters was something of a misnomer, given the restrictions that had been put in place around his own spending habits:

It's prison ... At first I thought that it was a nice place but now I don't. It is pretty cushty, yeah, but I want some trust. The only way that they're gonna see if they can trust me with money is if I have my money. I want my money. Givin' me £5 a day I can't go wrong with ... so they'll never know how well I can budget my

money – takes the Mickey. If I wanna go out with mi’ mates and spend all my weekly allowance in one day, I should be allowed. It’s my money. There’s no trust.

These circumstances were unusual in the sense that most residents had direct access to personal finances (i.e., state benefits) with project staff avoiding, where possible, any interference in such matters. In turn, the majority of residents articulated the desire for a swift transition into full-time work both for reasons of monetary gain and self-esteem. Mirroring conceptual understandings of the personally responsible citizen (Westheimer and Kahne 2004), discussions with residents on this issue revealed that whilst money was important to them in terms of the freedoms that it brought, equally (if not more) important was the need to obtain employment in order to establish themselves as legitimate, productive citizens (Rose 2000; Paton et al. 2012). In their view, without money they could do nothing – and be no one.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have attempted to illustrate how interpersonal relationships between residents and staff within a resettlement support project (New Horizons) enabled a growing sense of personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer and Kahne 2004) to be cultivated and to provide a pivotal step in the overall journey to citizenship (Tambakaki 2015). Consequently, we have demonstrated how residents who routinely manifested the common characteristics of anti-social lifestyles and behaviours (e.g., lack of trust and empathy, negative perceptions of life/chances, a resistance to notions of authority, and a deep scepticism of offers of support, help and advice from adults and significant others (see Farrington and Welsh 2007; Muncie 2015) acquired and consolidated skills and attributes akin to notions of the personally responsible citizen during their time at Thatchwell House. As with all interventions (within this and other domains), the support package on offer did not enable all of the residents to



develop these citizenship qualities. However, in some cases, especially where the length of residence and level of engagement with project workers was more profound, residents were able to enhance their self-discipline and attitude to work, develop greater compassion for those around them, and commit to their obligation to obtain paid employment as a condition of citizenship (Westheimer and Kahne 2004; Paton et al. 2012).

Consequently, the real value of the project was to be found in the gradual and incremental achievements of residents in response to the in-depth, trust-based, interpersonal relationships which staff built with them, and the stable value system around which life at Thatchwell House was modelled. In this sense, time was critical to the success of New Horizons, and as staff/resident relationships matured over time, life at the house stabilised, enabling a foundation for personally responsible citizenship to be cast. Building upon and extending previous scholarship in the area of marginalised youth (see Whittaker 2010; Rose et al. 2012; Author, 2017), the findings of this research indicate that the facilitation of inter-personal relationships in line with notions of acceptance and recognition is pivotal to first, addressing the often dysfunctional and chaotic lives of youth offenders, and, second, offering a measure of stability upon which aspects of passive citizenship and routes to employment can be constructed.

Nevertheless, in a political era dominated by neoliberal governance with a central emphasis on accountability, inspection and auditing as the primary means to evaluate policy decisions (Peck and Tickell 2002; Collier 2012; Winlow and Hall 2013), the necessity to demonstrate short-term impacts of interventions may limit the extent to which projects such as New Horizons can display their value. Consequently, it is our view that unless a more considered approach is adopted by government agencies to the assessment, evaluation and long-term funding of such work, the time necessary for the development and consolidation of relationships - and the

facilitation of citizenship attributes - may well fail to materialise, rendering projects such as New Horizons somewhat ineffective.

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